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AUTHOR Carder, Hilda; Morrison, Jim
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ABSTRACT

Alternative approaches to the assessment of language minority students are considered. A comprehensive assessment of the limited English proficient (LEP) student is said to cover the following components: cognitive development, learning proficiency or rate of learning techniques, social adaptation, language assessment (expression, reception, discrimination), special vocabulary and glossary of terminology, and the role of cultural differences. Continued assessment of LEP students with exceptional needs is emphasized, with equal attention to psychometric and edumetric (programing-related) assessment. Among assessment recommendations made are for prereferral screening, more recruitment of bilingual or ethnically appropriate bilingual personnel, and use of multiple instruments. Alternative practices include the test-teach-reteach approach and the use of Piagetian cognitive development tasks during which students are observed in problem solving situations. (CL)

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TECHNICAL ASPECTS OF FORMAL AND INFORMAL ASSESSMENT OF LANGUAGE MINORITY STUDENTS: A PRACTICAL APPROACH

Dr. Hilda Carder, Senior Psychologist
Los Angeles Unified School District

Mr. Jim Morrison, Psychologist
ABC Unified School District

Introduction

Bilingual/bicultural children are very limited in their exposure to English and Anglo culture. Consequently, most of the available standard assessment instruments should not be used. Alternative procedures are described that expand the assessment areas and approaches to make them more relevant to the children's life experiences.

I. What areas of the child's development should be evaluated in a comprehensive assessment of the LEP student?

An overview of the Psychological Assessment component and the Language Assessment component as taught by Dr. Rosa Payan will be presented. The psychological nonbiased assessment of the bilingual child (with exceptional needs) directs attention to all aspects of the child (the whole child philosophy). Six major areas are examined, following the State of California recomendations suggested in 1979 after the moratorium on IQ test for mentally retarded children was imposed.

Cognitive Development:

1. Piagetian theory and philosophy was reviewed, drawing from many sources including Dr. Edward De Avila's research.
2. The theory was applied to developmental tasks and observations in a laboratory setting.

EC 161195

3. All participants were given a materials list and an opportunity to familiarize themselves with the kit in order to develop one of their own.

Learning Proficiency or Rate of Learning Techniques were taught and practiced. (The Berkeley-Paired Association Test and the Raven's were used).

Social Adaptation. Information gathering skills were taught using check lists, questionnaires prepared in Spanish, and ready-made tests such as the ABIC Sompa-parent interview in Spanish, Vineland, etc.

Language Assessment. Stressing the importance of assessing all areas of language, and not just determining dominance, the following areas where taught:

1. Expression
2. Reception
3. Discrimination

Special Vocabulary and Glossaries of Terminology used in the school setting were taught:

1. Individual Educational Plans were developed in Spanish
2. Participants made home calls to Spanish-speaking homes
3. The appropriate use of translators was presented

The second language curriculum was especially designed to reinforce linguistic competencies necessary for interviewing and assessing Spanish-speaking students, and communicating the child's needs and accomplishments to monolingual Spanish parents.

Cultural Differences or considerations in the informal assessment were stressed. What both Dr. Payan and we tried to do was not just to teach participants how to administer tests in Spanish, but how to develop cultural sensitivity in test administration and interpretation. These included:

1. Cultural differences in value systems

2. Customs and manners

3. Differences in locus of motivation

4. Environmental variables

Participants worked with Spanish-speaking children (many of whom had special education needs) in a laboratory setting and administered tests in Spanish. Participants wrote both in-depth and informal assessments based on all aspects of the children they examined in the laboratory setting.

II. How should the continued assessment of LEP students with exceptional needs occur?

If the child qualifies for a special program, the Law 94-142 requires an annual review and a three year re-evaluation assessment. Mr. Morrison began his portion of the presentation by reiterating Carver's (1974) and Mercer's (1978) distinction between "psychometric" and "edumetric" assessment. He stated that "psychometric" assessment tools were generally norm referenced, used standard scores, and provided information for making placement decisions while planning educational programs. Mr. Morrison further stated that, to date, most of the emphasis on the assessment of language minority students has been in the "psychometric" area, focusing on appropriate diagnoses and placement.

Mr. Morrison believes that equal emphasis must now be given to "edumetric" assessment to provide the teacher/specialist with a relevant data base to write an appropriate IEP, and to remediate the child's academic difficulties. Accordingly, Mr. Morrison described a series of Spanish reading tests which are included in his book, The Assessment of Spanish Reading Problems (second experimental edition). These tests assess the areas of: visual memory, auditory analysis, sight vocabulary, word recognition, reading comprehension,

silent reading, dictation, and written language skills. Although Mr. Morrison is still in the process of field testing and revising these instruments, initial evaluations by bilingual teachers attending workshops within the ABC Unified School District and at Chapman College seem to indicate the data obtained from these assessment instruments provide useful information in developing classroom interventions for children with Spanish reading problems.

III. What formal and informal assessment tools are available for LEP students with exceptional needs?

Services and assessment for the bilingual exceptional child is a new thing for many of us in education. Many committees at the state and district level are being held to help us solve the problems we face in delivering services to the bilingual exceptional child.

To begin with, in many instances it takes the cooperation of two different programs: The Bilingual Education Program and The Special Education Program. We congratulate the soonsors of this conference for the excellent opportunity of bringing us together so as to inform ourselves. The following points should be noted as needing attention:

1. There is a lack of bilingual personnel or people with appropriate cultural/ethnic backgrounds to conduct the psychological and language diagnosis for bilingual exceptional (B/E) students.

2. There is a lack of appropriate evaluation instruments.

3. There is a lack of time and money available for training personnel to meet the needs of B/E students (second language acquisition; appropriate techniques, etc.)

4. When satisfactory assessment is done, many times there is a problem with program placement because of lack of bilingual personnel in the special education program to which the student is assigned (e.g., the resource specialist teacher or the educationally handicapped classroom).

In conclusion, we wish to allude to the research study conducted by Stephanie

Twomey for the State Department of Education (Special Education), in November 1980, in which several recommendations are made in regard to the assessment of the B/E students.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE BILINGUAL EXCEPTIONAL (B/E) STUDENT

1. Prereferral screening needs to be developed.
2. Conduct careful language assessment by appropriate bilingual personnel.
3. Attempt placement in alternative programs (other than special education).
4. More recruitment of bilingual or ethnically appropriate personnel (psychologists, language diagnosticians).
5. Because of dissatisfaction with available instruments--multiple instruments should be used.
6. Psychologists should be the first targets for inservice in practical alternatives to IQ tests. They should also be given awareness training.
7. Administrators should be trained in linguistic and cultural awareness as well as knowing what constitutes an appropriate assessment for a B/E student.
8. The regular educational program should be strengthened to serve the B/E student (continuation of services--regular and special education.)

ALTERNATIVES IN ASSESSMENT PRACTICES

In the use of alternative assessment practices, first examine the student in his/her environment, instead of just in the testing situation. Include culture, language, family, school, social environment, adaptive behavior in the classroom, playground, home, and neighborhood.

Second, develop need alternatives to IQ testing, such as observing learning potential at the moment of assessment in a test-teach-retest approach. Observe learning rate and find the optimum performance level. An example of this would be the Learning Potential Assessment Device (LPAD) as suggested by Dr. Rueven Fuerstein.

Third, another alternative that is used in Area 6 (Los Angeles Unified School District) is Piagetian cognitive development tasks during which students are observed in problem solving situations. It tries to find the strengths and weaknesses in the student's cognitive development. Some of the stages are:

Sensory-motor	18 mos
Preconceptual operations	2-4 yrs.
Concrete operations	4-7 yrs.
Formal operations	7-11 yrs.

Another area in which we try to train our psychologists to be particularly careful, is in the area of language screening. The reason for this is that they can have consultant services from a bilingual psychologist or language specialist to assess the student's language in both English and Spanish if they need it. Expressive and receptive language assessment is one of the preliminary steps done in assessment. Because of the state of the art in the assessment of B/E students, and because of the dissatisfaction with available instruments appropriate to this population, we believe that we must concentrate on the development of the skills and attitudes of our psychologists. Finally, we must supply them with appropriate bilingual personnel to work with B/E students.